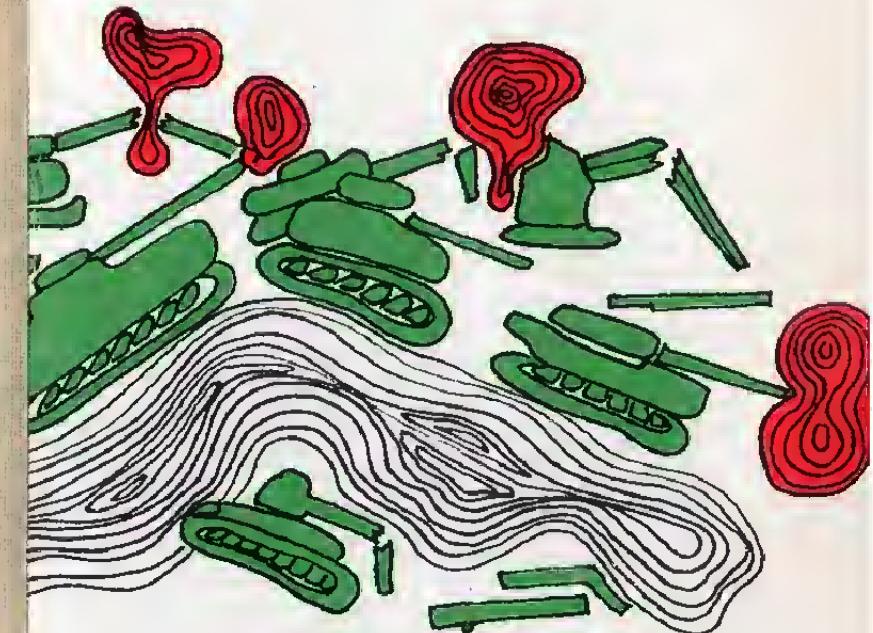




Arab Ba'th Socialist Party

ABOUT THE 1973 OCTOBER-WAR



Unity Freedom Socialism



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1973
OCTOBER-WAR

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Report adopted by the 8th
Regional Congress (Iraq) of ABSP
Baghdad, January 1974

Unity Freedom Socialism



Books of reference

How does the revolution face the imperialist conspiracy and the counter-revolution.

The Arab region: what is she and where is she going?

Pertinent problems and questions.

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Editor's Note

The Arab Socialist Ba'th Party regards all Arabs as being part of one nation both in the cultural and spiritual sense. The different countries in which they live, make up a politically and economically united fatherland. In the Party's documents, 'the Arab fatherland' means all the Arab countries. Each of these is a 'qotr' which, literally translated, means country; in the Ba'th context, it should be read as province or region. The adjective 'Qotri' (provincial, regional) is used when referring to an individual country. The adjective 'qawmi' (national), on the other hand, is used when referring to all the countries which together make up the one fatherland. Thus, the National Directorate deals only with matters concerning the whole fatherland. Each Regional Directorate deals with matters within its own country. As for example, the Lebanese or Jordanian Regional Directorate etc.

The word Ba'th can be translated as meaning

revival, resurgence or renewal. Hitherto, resurgence seems to be the meaning which is preferred by Arab intellectuals and foreign Arab experts.

Introduction

Following the cease-fire on 24 October 1973, the National and Regional Leaderships of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (ABSP) and the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) issued a statement to the Arab masses, explaining the stand of the Party and the Revolution on the war, the cease-fire and on the policies pursued by the concerned regimes. They also promised the masses to disclose all the facts in due course.

Thereafter, the Party's 8th Regional Conference, convened in Baghdad in Jan. 1974, discussed and endorsed a "Special Report on the October War—Motives, Developments and Prospects".

During the past months, the Arab area abounded in various forms of manoeuvres and misleading that aimed at taming the Arab masses and sneaking surrenderist settlements to the rattle of arms and boisterous political and diplomatic clamour.

But the show is now over. More than seven

months to the cease-fire, and despite all the great sacrifices made by the Arab masses and armies throughout the October War, the regimes involved attained nothing save an agreement for disengagement of forces. This fact cannot be denied by the uproar that is trying to portray the agreement as a "victory" while it is only a perpetuation of the cease-fire and a restoration of only a negligible part of the usurped land—leaving Sinai, the western bank of River Jordan, the Golan Heights and Jerusalem under the occupation of the Zionist enemy.

In fulfillment of the pledge made by the leadership of the Party and the Revolution to disclose the truth to the masses, we publish today the report adopted by the 8th Regional Congress concerning the October War, the paths likely to be followed by the concerned regimes and the expected developments—all of which estimates have been borne out by the experience of the past months.

Before the war

The war that erupted on October 6, 1973 was no surprise to the Leadership of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (ABSP). A fairly long time before the out-break of the fighting, this Leadership has indeed anticipated that the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, succumbing to the directions and temptations of certain foreign and even Arab rings, might venture some sort of military action against Israel with the aim of "activating" the situation in the area to facilitate the enforcement of the "peaceful solution" they are after. Preliminary forecast indicated that the expected military action might be triggered in May or June 1973.

In mid-November, 1972, the Regional Leadership of the ABSP prepared a report defining the basic conceptions of anticipated future developments in the area and the role of the Party and the Revolution in facing them; the report also pointed out the dangers involving innovated ways

and means that threaten the Party and the Revolution.

Upon that report, a series of editorials entitled "What is Happening in the Area? what may the future be?" was run in the Party's organ—"Ath-Thawra"—between 11-26 February 1973 [An English version of those articles was later compiled in a book under their original title] The possibility that the Egyptian and Syrian regimes might resort to a "rattle of arms" to bring the "peaceful solution" into being was one of the deductions and conclusions disclosed in that series.

The ABSR conceived a full and comprehensive image of the motives and expected outcome of that approach. It held that the recourse of these regimes to that method was just an attempt to get rid of the suffocating impasse engulfing them ever since the June 1967 defeat. Their dilemma, in the eyes of the Party, is this: while imploring in vain for a "peaceful solution" and refusing to take the rough road of a war of liberation and pay the inevitable price, they are sparing no efforts for protecting themselves, and their positions in the area, against the masses' mounting indignation and exhausted patience over the protracted occupation.

The ABSR also held that reckoning upon such a tactical solution would neither lead to effective results in favour of the Arab cause for liberation from Zionist occupation, nor to the objectives these regimes claim to be pursuing, and which they identify

as the "just and honourable solution" through the implementation of Security Council Resolution No. 242—regardless of the involved basic concessions at the expense of Arab interests.

The ABSR laid down an integrated plan of struggle for liberation. That plan found repeated expression through the Party's announcements to the masses and the schemes it presented at the official Arab levels. In the latter case, two particular proposals are worth mentioning: the "Scheme for Fighting Unity" submitted to the Syrian and Egyptian regimes in March 1972, during the visit paid by the Deputy Secretary-General of the Regional Leadership of the Party to Damascus and Cairo, and the "Scheme for Using Oil as a Weapon in the Battle" submitted to the Joint Arab Defence Council in January, 1973.

But the Arab regimes, specially Egypt and Syria, received these schemes with indifference and resorted to procrastination as well as to explicit or implicit defamation.

That attitude, and a host of other evidence, quite clearly proved that the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, together with reactionary Arab circles headed by Saudi Arabia, as well as foreign quarters colluding with them in the "concoction", were all collaborating to preclude Iraq from playing any effective role in the area.

They were gambling on this theory: The ABSR's strict adherence to its principled stands and to its

demand for an overall strategy for liberation is inconsistent with Iraq's inability to dispatch significant military forces to the battle field—because of converging Iranian danger and the instability of the peaceful settlement of the kurdish problem. This incompatibility will virtually prevent Iraq from taking part in any military action, thereby paving the way to its insulation, the undermining of its position before and after any military engagement and may ultimately help overthrow its revolution. Thus, the wheels of the peaceful solution can roll along the desired course, without any major obstacles.

While pointing out that we were not in a position, under the obtaining conditions, to send abroad effective armed forces, the November 1972 report of the ABSP's Regional Leadership also stressed that any change in the prevailing conditions would necessarily lead to a change of that position. It said:

"As far as our obligations are concerned, in the light of all comprehensive evaluations of the political situation, we find ourselves at present unable to send abroad military forces of effective might, and in a manner reassuring us that they would be employed in line with the slogan we have raised concerning the Arab cause. Needless to say, there is no reason to believe that the present calculations and circumstances are unchangeable. Therefore, any change in the seriousness and vividness of the aim of the national battle and in the factors that restricted, and still do, our role within its

present scope, must be accompanied by a new attitude towards the question of our effective military participation outside the country in a manner consistent with the actual change".

How we took part in the war

In the afternoon of October 6, 1973, war broke out on both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts. Perhaps we might point out here that we have previously declared that the news of the war was conveyed to us by broadcasting networks alone. This is true from an official angle, because neither the Egyptian nor the Syrian government cared to give us prior information on the war.

However, we did receive unofficial reports on the impending fight from our own sources. All available information and conclusions indicated that the said regimes had sparked the war to revive the situation through a strong shock facilitating the application of the peaceful solution. And this was identical with our previous forecast.

Immediately after the eruption of the war, a joint meeting of the National and Regional Leaderships of the ABSP and the Revolution Command Council was convened, and was followed by a simi-

lar meeting the next day—October, 7. The following decisions were adopted during those two meetings:

1. The nationalization of the US shares in the Basrah Petroleum Company to spark the political-oil battle against American imperialism, in fulfilment of the line of the Party and the Revolution regarding the usage of oil as a weapon in the national battle.
2. Immediate flight of air forces to the Syrian Front.
3. Immediate despatch of the largest possible number of our striking ground forces to the Front.
4. Resumption of diplomatic relations with Iran and inviting her to settle bilateral disputes peacefully and through negotiations. This decision was also impelled by the safety of our eastern front.

Following two extraordinary meetings held on 6-7 October, 1973, the Supreme Committee of the Patriotic and Progressive National Front also endorsed those decisions.

The said decisions were based on the following considerations that the Regional Leadership has elucidated before the extraordinary session of the Party's 8th Regional congress held in Baghdad on October 10, 1973, and which, along with the Leadership's above-mentioned decisions, have been unanimously endorsed:

1. Our evaluation of the motives and engineered ends of the war must not impede our full and

vanguard participation in the battle. Whatever those motives and ends might be, the masses view the war, specially at the peak of its blaze, as a battle against a usurping enemy. Consequently, they rightly expect their Party and Revolution in Iraq to take part in the fighting in a measure and a standard commensurate with their own principles, slogans and national responsibilities.

2. Unless they take a vanguard and effective part in the fighting, the ABSP and the revolutionary power of Iraq cannot possibly denounce the compromising and submissive trends and attitudes assumed by the regimes in question, during and after the battle.

The absence of such a contribution will deprive the Party and the Revolution from their ability for mobilizing and guiding the masses along the main roads of revolutionary Arab struggle against imperialism, zionism and reaction. In other words, it will divest them of their influential vanguard role in the Arab arena, leaving the initiative into the hands of the defeatist and reactionary regimes.

3. The realization of the ends which the concerned regimes sought by flaring the war and all what they planned for, is not sure. Moreover, in any similar large operation, unforeseen extremely important results might just crop up. Therefore, the broad and effective participation of the Party and the Revolution in the war will offer a golden opportu-

nity for diverting the battle into a radically militant channel. In addition, it will provide opportunities for attaining different results from those sought by the regimes in question—results advantageous to the liberation war and to the basic objectives of the Arab liberation movement.

4. The endeavour of those regimes to isolate Iraq from taking any effective part in the developments of the area, particularly in this military battle, implies the existence of an evil conspiratorial scheming for the ultimate overthrow of the Revolution. As earlier elucidated, unless Iraq makes an effective contribution to the battle, the Revolution will lose its vanguard influential role in the Arab area and will suffer a tense state of isolation, providing both internal and external counter-revolutionary forces with pretexts for conspiring against the revolutionary regime led by the ABSP in Iraq.

The non-participation of Iraq in the battle will also furnish those regimes with ample cover for their tendency towards a settlement and the concomitant liquidation of the Arab cause; and will provide them with the possibility of laying the blame at our own doors, alleging that our refraining from going to war on their side has diminished the required potentials for beating the enemy. Viewed from this serious angle, our effective participation in the battle is one of the daring revolutionary ways for defending the Revolution and reinforcing its positions and vanguard role on the domestic and

pan-Arab levels. It is also one of the fundamental means for invalidating the pretexts of those heading towards capitulationist and liquidationist solutions.

5. The out-break of a hot battle against the zionist enemy has provided the circumstances foretold in the Regional Leadership's report of November, 1972. Thus, we can send abroad substantial military units.

The Iranian government would not dare launch a military aggression against Iraq during the rage of the battle. This is due to vital considerations, namely the emotions of the Muslim peoples of Iran who support the just Arab cause, the Iranian government's desire not to insulate itself from the Arab states and the presence, at the Iranian border, of the Soviet Union, which is bound with Iraq by a treaty of friendship and cooperation.

Likewise, the atmosphere of a hot battle against Israel, will stand as a psychological barrier in the face of any attempt on the part of dubious forces in the kurdish movement at stirring large-scale disturbances in northern Iraq.

The developments and both the foreseen and casual outcome of the war testified the soundness of the considerations upon which the leadership has based its above-mentioned decisions. They also bore witness to the decisive historic need for such decisions. These factors combined to make Iraq's participation in the war yield an outcome of historically crucial nature:

The Leadership's direct supervision over the enforcement of all, and even the minute details, of the military, political and diplomatic aspects of those decisions; feeding the process of enforcement with a valiant spirit; the wonderful initiatives taken by our armed forces in their lightning arrival at the firing-line, in their instantaneous engagement against the enemy and in all the military operations they fought.

The battle's strategy designed by the Egyptian and Syrian regimes on the basis of surprise and blitzkrieg (with the exclusion of Iraq) would have led to a definite military catastrophe in the Syrian front five or six days after the war.

After breaking through some areas atop the Golan Heights in the first two days of the battle, the Syrian forces, handicapped by the lack of prior calculations on the part of their command, found themselves besieged with a hostile system of anti-armour ground rocket defences, in addition to enemy armoured forces. Consequently, the Syrian armoured forces suffered very heavy losses.

Recovering from the stun of the first strike and managing to mobilize its reserve forces, the enemy launched a counter-offensive against the Syrian forces and obliged them to retreat—bringing the enemy to the outskirts of Damascus and exposing the Syrian Front to a grave collapse.

Taking into consideration the tactical character imposed on the war by the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, the fall of Damascus into enemy hands

would have brought a military and political disaster to these two regimes and to the official Arab stand opposing the prosecution of a long-term war, wherein the occupation of land and towns does not have any decisive impact over the strategical outcome.

As admitted by certain Syrian officials, the vanguard of the Iraqi armoured forces reached the battle ground at a time when Damascus was threatened with imminent occupation and when official offices and a large part of the inhabitants were preparing to desert the town, in compliance with official instructions from the Syrian government. But the Iraqi forces, with great courage, managed to push the enemy backwards; and as they dashed into the battle field in increasing numbers and fought with a fearless militant spirit—a fact acknowledged by the foes before the friends—our forces eventually succeeded in stabilizing the Syrian Front in the face of enemy large-scale hysterical onslaughts involving tremendous enemy military potentials.

When all the Iraqi forces reached the Syrian Front, they were quite ready for launching an all-out offensive for the liberation of the Golan Heights. The zero hour for that offensive was 3 a.m. on 23rd October. But the Syrian government asked for the adjournment of the operation, only to announce its acceptance of the cease-fire the next day—24th October!?

The crucial role played by Iraq in the military and political spheres following the nationalization

of the US shares in the Basrah Petroleum Company and the subsequent nationalization of the Dutch share in the same company; the marvelous prime of militancy demonstrated by the Arab forces on both Egyptian and Syrian fronts; the masses' mounting uprising that covered the entire Arab homeland in support of the escalation of the battle . . . all these factors combined to create a situation totally different from the outcome planned by the regimes that designed the "concoction of the war of activation":

The US interests fell vulnerable to a serious danger; reactionary and "moderate" regimes found themselves compelled to assume ostensibly tough stands; and the conditions of the Arab area heralded a blood-baptized resurgence of the Arab revolutionary movement and the cause of Arab unity.

The cease-fire

Fearful of this serious development, many parties joined efforts to circumvent the sweeping revolutionary wave, by seeking a cease-fire to return to the ring of bargaining with the zionist enemy and us imperialism.

The circles that planned the battle on the basis of "activating" the stagnant situation in preparation to bargaining, had a keen desire and real interest in ceasing fire and in simultaneously appearing before the masses as combatants who have won "a victory", though partial as it is. us imperialism and reaction also had a real interest in the cease-fire, stemming from their fear of revolutionary developments in Arab conditions. The "middle-of-the-road" regimes wanted to clear their consciences from national responsibility and to rid themselves of the heavy burdens that would be imposed by the continuation of the war.

Perhaps the Israeli break-through to the western

bank of the Suez Canal deserves a little pause. The results of this thrust created a kind of "equilibrium" in the new political and military balance, which was completely in favour of the Arabs in the first ten days of the war. This new development in its turn, led to the weakening of the political position of the regimes in question, even within the context of their search for a "peaceful solution". Hence the enemy's refusal (despite all the concessions made to it and to us imperialism by the Egyptian government) to withdraw to the June 22nd lines on the Egyptian Front before making the concerned Arabs sit with it around the negotiations table.

Thus, in spite of the war's impact on the conditions of the area, the fundamental question in the eyes of the concerned regimes—withdrawal from all territories occupied in 1967 and recognition of the legitimate rights of the people of Palestine—has so far received no serious discussion or care.

Available military information and the study of the balance of forces on the Egyptian Front during the war indicate that the Israeli break-through cannot be attributed to purely military reasons.

In this respects, there exist several probabilities of a serious political import:

1. The single-aim Egyptian military plan drove only at crossing the Suez Canal and entrenching on a narrow strip on its eastern bank. In other words, the Egyptian leadership did not plan for the probability of advancing further eastwards. Nor did it

provide for the possibility of an exceptional enemy reaction, as had actually taken place by the breakthrough to the western bank of the Suez Canal. This short-coming reveals the superficial and ultimately losing aspect of the tactical outlook to the military battle—an outlook that constituted the starting point of those regimes.

2. The prime of militancy displayed by the Egyptian armed forces throughout the first ten days of the war suffered a psychological set-back in the wake of President Sadat's address of October 16. This demoralized the fighting ability of the Egyptian troops, thus setting the stage for the Israëli break-through.

3. This break-through was a premeditated conspiracy in which certain influential circles in the Egyptian authority had colluded.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the acceptance of the cease-fire and the reaction to the zionist crossing to the western bank of the Suez Canal is this: the regimes that prepared the "concoction of the war of activation" aimed at nothing more than "activating" the situation, and were primarily ready to accept any possible enemy military or political retreat for arriving at a settlement.

The Algiers Summit

This conclusion has been confirmed by all the measures and stands taken, ever since the cease-fire, by the Egyptian and Syrian regimes and by the other regimes cooperating with them.

The Egyptian and Syrian regimes desperately needed an Arab "cover" for their desire to make basic concessions in exchange for a settlement of the occupation problem. And that cover they did find through the Arab summit conference held in Algiers on November, 26, 1973 and through subsequent Arab meetings and conferences.

Certain Arab governments played a basic role in providing the "cover". Under the guise of supporting, and strengthening the will of the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, those governments fervently arranged the summit conference, which was, instantly, welcome by reactionary regimes and imperialist circles. The conference gave the green light to the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, together with certain leaderships

of the Palestinian Resistance, to go to the Geneva Conference and work out a settlement. However, to screen the essence of its dangerous compromising resolutions, the conference resorted to a tone of verbal toughness, which means nothing in reality. And this is exactly what we have anticipated when we boycotted it.

The Party's leadership decided to boycott the Algier's summit conference on these grounds:

1. The Egyptian and Syrian regimes have already taken, by themselves alone, all the fundamental decisions: the acceptance of the cease-fire, the recognition of both Security Council Resolutions Nos. 242 and 338, and the agreement to attend the Geneva Conference. And Egypt has, in addition, taken fundamental unilateral steps, such as resuming diplomatic relations with the US and drifting to it, primarily, in pursuit of a settlement.

After all these decisions, the conference was left with no basic issue that it might discuss or decide upon. Therefore, attending the conference meant only warranting all previous decisions and any similar new decisions.

2. Opposing the previous and intended policies of the involved Arab regimes from within the conference will not have, in a general atmosphere of official Arab support to those policies, the desired effect in the Arab area. Such a stand might get lost or be diluted into the clamour of verbal tough-

ness which we expected the conference to resort to (which it did) as part of the information forgery perpetrated by Arab and international circles supporting a settlement.

3. At this crucial historical stage, it is essential to take up completely clear-cut decisive stands, because the new phase in the Arab struggle against imperialism, zionism and reaction needs to rest on such stands. Their clarity and distinction from the attitudes of defeatist Arab regimes are essential requisites for the present and future success and effectiveness of the required stands.

The oil-weapon

Now we come to the role of oil in the developments under discussion. The basic line pursued by the regimes in this field exactly dove-tailed with their basic line in the military and political fields, namely, refraining from taking any really radical stands and feigning only superficially "tough" stands within the "activation" plan that eventually feed the mainstream of US and reactionary schemings.

Iraq's nationalization of the American shares in the Basrah Petroleum Company sparked off the political oil-battle, and powerfully demonstrated how oil could be used as a weapon in the battle. This drastic measure placed the oil-producing regimes in an extremely critical situation, because they were originally averse to adopting an attitude of that kind, and because they hoped that the war would soon end, in accordance with previous calculations, thus sparing them the pains of taking up any stand.

But the fact that the war lasted more than originally expected, side by side with the mounting popular demand for the liquidation of US interests, impelled those regimes to seek a formula for outflanking the demand for nationalization and for divesting the popular pressure of its powerful impetus.

Consequently, the Kuwaiti government sponsored a conference of Arab oil ministers to discuss the utilization of oil in the service of the battle. The conference was held eleven days after the out-break of the war—in the wake of President Sadat's address that had vividly indicated an intention to halt the war and accept a settlement dished out by the US.

Under pressure from Saudi Arabia, that opposed what it termed as "mixing oil in politics", the Kuwaiti conference decided to reduce production by 5 per cent—a decision that was received by the disapproval and rejection of the Arab masses.

It is worth mentioning here, that the Egyptian government itself was among the group of states advocating the adoption of a "lenient" resolution. More precisely, Egypt requested the participant Arab states, in an official memorandum, to decide a 15 per cent cut down of US shares and a 10 per cent cut down of the shares of West European states and Japan.

The massive rejection of the Kuwaiti conference's resolution and the continuation of the war, even

after President Sadat's address, cornered those Arab regimes in a critical situation. Therefore, the government of Abu Dhabi hastened to impose a total embargo on oil shipments to the US, then followed (two days before the cease-fire) Saudi Arabia, which had previously chosen to cut down its oil production by 10 per cent. Algeria, Libya and Kuwait also followed suit.

It is apparent that the above steps were impelled by the impact of the unanticipated continuation of the battle and the sweeping popular pressure, and by a sense of embarrassment and fear of the masses' reaction and the consequences of a fierce battle, particularly by the menace to US imperialist interests and to the positions of the "middle-of-the-road" regimes.

In the meantime, Arab oil-producing states, led by Saudi Arabia, tended, particularly after the cease-fire, to capitalize the decisions of imposing an oil embargo on the US, and of reducing oil production in favour of the main trends of their machiavellic oil policy which is colluding with US imperialism:

1. By following that oil policy, Saudi Arabia will appear to be taking a "tough" stand against the US, while the Egyptian and Syrian regimes will seem to be lenient. This implies that the reactionary Saudi regime, which is indeed the "Arab" agent of US imperialism in the area, will lead the political battle. Once this regime holds the reins, it can divert events according to US and reactionary designs.

2. Recourse to a policy of reducing production at progressive rates, virtually means placing Western Europe and Japan in a highly critical position. Yet the regimes in question claim that such a policy would prompt West European states and Japan to take up stands favouring the Arabs, or in the interest of accelerating the achievement of the peaceful settlement.

But viewed from a practical angle, though Western Europe and Japan do have an important role in this matter, the cornering of these two parties in such a critical position (and without an accurate discrimination between European states) would eventually drive them to closer alignment with the stand of the US on political issues pertaining to the Middle East and on the oil question, specially as the US has already advocated the foundation of an oil-consumers front to face the oil-producers. Ultimately this means new gains for US policies and influence in Europe, and in the international oil policy. Iraq warned against that suspicious policy in public stands, and refused the decisions adopted in its light by Arab states.

As earlier mentioned, the essence and ends of the oil policy followed by those regimes, were fully consistent with those of the military and political techniques they employed since the outbreak of the October war. Those policies, if we may reiterate, will eventually lead, under the cloak of verbally and formally tough but actually compromising stands, to

making basic concessions in detriment to the Arab liberation movement and the Arab right in Palestine and the occupied Egyptian and Syrian lands, as well as to submission to US designs for re-arranging the conditions of the area to suit its own purposes.

Our decision to call our troops home

As explained before the Party's Regional Conference, during its extraordinary session of October 25, 1973, the Leadership resolved to withdraw our air and ground forces from both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts, immediately after the Syrian government agreed to cease-fire, and accepted Security Council Resolution No. 338, which is based on Security Council Resolution No. 242 of 1967. The Leadership based its decision on the following considerations:

1. The Iraqi army was sent to the Egyptian and Syrian fronts to join the battle in fulfillment of the vision of the Revolution and the Arab masses, i.e., to fight for the liberation of the occupied Arab land, refusing any surrenderist or liquidationist solutions. The acceptance of the Egyptian and Syrian governments of the cease-fire and the two Security Council Resolutions Nos. 242 and 338, which involve seeking

negotiations with the enemy and relinquishing to it some Arab lands it had usurped before the last war, meant terminating the battle of liberation and proceeding to bargain the Arab rights and interests.

Thus, there remained no doctrinal or political justification for retaining our armed forces in those two fronts. On the other hand, we refuse to have our armed forces used as a sentry of the cease-fire, or as an element of pressure in the ring of bargaining the vital rights and interests of our Arab nation.

2. Considered against our rejection of both the cease-fire and the two decisions of the Security Council, as well as against our demand for carrying the war through, keeping our ground forces on the Syrian front and the complications of their virtual subordination to the command of the Syrian government, place these forces in a delicate and hazardous situation.

In an atmosphere of cease-fire and political compromises, coupled with the concomitant state of relaxation and dismantling in the entire Syrian front, the enemy can deal our forces a surprise vengeful blow. And though that blow might be effective, we shall not be able to retaliate in a deterring manner, and to escalate the fighting in the direction we conceived, because the reins of the situation are not in our hands.

The enemy and US imperialism have a definite interest—at both strategic and tactical levels—in dealing such a blow for which they can find many

a pretext. Also, we cannot at all dismiss the idea that certain official Arab quarters would be happy with such a blow for vilifying the distinguished moral standard displayed by our forces during the fighting and marring its inherent grave effects on existing and future conditions of the Arab area.

Moreover, any abuse to the ability and prestige of the Iraqi army will have a direct adverse effect in case we suffer any foreign aggression. Naturally, anyone thinking of committing an aggression against our country, will, in the first place, take into account whether he is going to face a strong army of internationally recognized high spirit and good reputation, or an army suffering a humiliating defeat.

3. While the flames of the battle against the zionist enemy constitute a strong psychological and political barrier preventing the Iranian regime from launching an aggression against Iraq and hindering the suspect elements in the kurdish armed movement, together with the other internal dubious pockets, from daring commit large-scale open acts of sabotage, the cease-fire and the concomitant fluidity and conjectures do not provide such a barrier.

Under this state of affairs, stationing a large part of our armed forces outside the country created a serious situation endangering our security and our Revolution.

Those were the considerations upon which the Leadership has built the decision of withdrawing our

troops from the Egyptian and Syrian fronts. They were also endorsed by the ABSR Regional Conference in its extraordinary session of October 25.

The Syrian regime, together with several Arab circles, tried to inflame an "artificial" crisis and row over the decision of withdrawing our forces. We arrived at the conclusion that the sparking of that "artificial" concern and care over this matter, after the Egyptian and Syrian regimes had decided a ceasefire and agreed to accept the proposed solution, implied either of—perhaps both—the following two probabilities:

First: The exploitation of this matter for belittling, as far as possible, the impact created in the Arab area, particularly in Syria, by the participation of the Iraqi forces in the battle, and for restoring the previous passive atmospheres wherein the stands of the Party and the Revolution were shrouded before the war.

Second: Those regimes' hopes that the perils threatening the Party and the Revolution, because of stationing the Iraqi forces abroad, would materialize.

Conclusions and probabilities

Below is a survey, based on a current scrutiny of the situation, of the preliminary conclusions and probabilities of the conditions in the area:

1. Despite all its positive effects and new results, the military operation (which was planned and handled, in the manner previously explained, by the Egyptian and Syrian regimes since the eruption of the fighting on October 6) has failed to produce decisive military results capable of forcing an immediate or rapid enemy withdrawal from the Arab lands occupied in the June 1967 war, and of ensuring the implementation of Security Council Resolution No. 242.

The maximum effect so far realized by that operation is the "activation" of the so-called "Middle East Crisis" — after a stagnation that prevailed since the failure of the Rogers Plan in 1970—and the consequent posing of the crisis for conspicuously strong

and vigorous discussion by the US, the USSR, the UN and many international parties, each, of course, from its personal position and conception.

2. The Israeli break-through and crossing to the western bank of the Suez Canal placed the Egyptian government in a terrible military and political situation, thereby undermining its negotiating position. Consequently, instead of embarking on the discussion of the major issue in the eyes of the regimes concerned (withdrawal from the Arab lands occupied in the June 1967 war) very protracted talks, over the return to the October, 22 lines, and the disengagement of forces at Kilometre 101, dragged on in an atmosphere charged with procrastination, manoeuvres and fabricated crises. Later, the whole affair was passed to the Geneva Conference and thence to direct negotiations with the Zionist enemy, under the umbrella and directions of US imperialism. This means that the Geneva negotiations (legally, they are direct negotiations for peace with the enemy—a matter for which Israel kept trying for a quarter of a century) have practically started with secondary and branch subjects and not with the targets sought by the concerned regimes, notwithstanding the grave ceding of essential Arab rights entailed by the achievement of those targets.

3. Oil is the most influential instrument in the present situation. This is due to the crisis it is now causing in Western Europe, Japan and the US, and to the resonant international political clamour it is

arousing. But the destiny of oil is neither in the hands of the Egyptian, nor the Syrian regimes; it is primarily in the hands of the pro-American Saudi regime that is fully committed to American policies in the area.

This is a virtual weakening of the negotiating positions of the Syrian and Egyptian regimes, providing Arab reaction with extensive opportunities for influencing these two regimes and steering their negotiating stands and general policies along the mainstream of US and reactionary policies in the area, no matter that all this process would take place across a chain of familiar cunning manoeuvres and camouflages.

4. The impact of the military aspect, which had been—during the war—in the hands of the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, is gradually leaning towards weakness, because of the cease-fire, the domination of an atmosphere of bargains and concessions, and the fall of the key to the situation into reactionary hands.

Besides, the positive results accomplished by the military action during the war, will not be of the same material and moral measure in the event of a renewal of the fighting. For the Zionist enemy, that has been surprised by the war and that committed grave errors while assessing the situation, particularly with respect to the competence and militancy of the Arab armed forces, has now learnt the lesson by heart, and guarded against similar eventualities.

Furthermore, the Arab warrior, who threw himself into the battle with amazing valour on October 6, with the aim of restoring his usurped land, will not dart, with the same zeal and intrepidity, into battles which he knows, before-hand, are part of settlements leading eventually to the ceding of his basic rights and interests.

5. The "flexibility" exhibited by the zionist enemy till the October war, regarding its withdrawal from the Arab lands it had occupied in 1967, varied from one country to the other:

As to Sinai, there has been, right from the outset, a clear measure of relative « flexibility », except for Sharm as-Sheikh, Gazza and a coastal fringe. Regarding the Western bank, the Israeli "flexibility" has been expressed in the Allon Plan, and even in King Husein's plan known as the United Arab Kingdom, which is akin to American and zionist proposals. But the enemy showed no flexibility whatsoever regarding its withdrawal from Golan Heights.

Needless to say, the enemy's pre-October war stands shall not always remain exactly as they were. The new realities might indeed effect some change in those stands. But whatever its extent, the change is not likely, under the obtaining circumstances and indicators, to amount to full withdrawal. In plain words, the enemy shall be allowed to retain some of the lands it had usurped in 1967. This fact, which asserts itself in Golan more than in any other area, constitutes a serious element of embarrass-

ment to the Egyptian and Syrian regimes. All their attempts to depict the settlement as a means for realizing important ends will not save them from colliding, at one of the phases of the settlement, with this very bitter and very painful fact.

Taking Syria alone, the matter assumes an extremely high degree of sensitivity and gravity for two main considerations: The presence of the ABSP at the helm of the Revolution in Iraq, in contrast to the allegation of the Syrian regime that it represents the same party. Secondly, the presence, in Syria, of a national heritage squarely against reconciliation with Israel and any ceding whatsoever of the Arab right in Palestine. What if the concessions made to the enemy included relinquishing part of the Syrian land proper?!

6. In addition to the extreme difficulties besetting the question of withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, and notwithstanding their readiness to relinquish the palestinian lands usurped prior to 1967 and to recognize "Israel", these regimes can not escape facing the problem of "the rights of the palestinian people" as portrayed by the formulas and conceptions rife within official Arab and international quarters:

The Jordanian regime, for instance, claims to be the representative of the palestinian people. Meanwhile, there exist the palestinian Resistance and the Palestinian Liberation Organization that stand as the representative of the Palestinians. Indeed

some of the wings and leaderships of this movement seek to be seated, as the Palestinian side, at the negotiations-table in the Geneva Conference.

The solution to this problem and to the crises it might ramify, requites much time and highly complicated efforts on the part of the regimes concerned.

7. Unless it secured sure positions inside the Egyptian and Syrian regimes, and unless it felt assured about the future safety of its serious strategic interests in the area, the US will not try to pressurize Israel to the extent that impells it to withdraw from the occupied territories in a fashion which the concerned regimes can accept and justify before the nation—hard and perilous as that might be.

This pre-supposes essential changes in the internal and external policies of the Egyptian and Syrian governments, and in a great many of the obtaining conditions of the area. But despite the willingness of the Egyptian and Syrian regimes to make many concessions in all fields to the US and Arab reaction, there remain certain bounds which they cannot easily transgress, and this is particularly true to the Syrian regime. There is the Revolution in Iraq which constitutes a hindering and denouncing factor to any trend of this kind. There are also the progressive forces and quarters in these two countries and in the entire Arab homeland. Should any transgression of those bounds come to pass, it

will entail extremely hard, complex and prolonged internal struggle in both countries.

On the other hand, the present US Administration lacks the requisite ability for pressurizing Israël. This is due to its weakness and to its need for the support of US zionism. This disability makes the situation more complicated and leads either to undermining American pressure on Israël (thereby rendering the arrival at a settlement acceptable to the Arab regimes more difficult) or else to demanding from these regimes to assume certain attitudes and policies in favour of the US (which they can not do in the manner desired by the US to serve as an excuse for bringing pressure to bear upon Israël).

8. The Soviet Union, which played a basic role in the sequence of events in the area, from the outbreak of the war to the announcement of Security Council resolution No. 338, and the enforcement of the cease-fire, began to feel that the destiny of the solution has shifted to the hands of US imperialism, particularly so after the Egyptian government's flagrant drift for cooperation with the US, and reliance on it alone for acquiring the settlement.

It is unlikely that the Soviet Union will sit back with folded arms and watch this serious development. More likely, it will adopt certain policies and stands to counter the new situation one way or the other. This will add new complications to the problem and place one more road-block in the

way of these regimes' policies and inclinations towards an American-reactionary settlement.

Should they continue to conduct the negotiations with the US behind the back of the Soviet Union, the "hard line" we expect the Soviets to adopt will be in the form of refusing to provide the concerned regimes with the required cover or justification for their desired peaceful settlement, thus leaving them to bear alone the responsibility of any decision they take in this respect.

9. Certain leaderships of the Palestinian Resistance movement are disposed to accept the proposed solutions—provided a Palestinian state is created, under their rule, in the Western Bank and Gaza. These leaderships' precipitation is being opposed by other parties and the fighting bases of the movement. It is also creating a state of confusion among wide sections of the Resistance movement, which (confusion) will inhibit the movement of these leaderships.

Meanwhile, Jordan strongly opposes this trend, as does also Israel, which has repeatedly emphasized that it would not agree to the existence of more than one state, namely Jordan, between herself and Iraq.

This question is one of the explosive problems in the whole situation; and so far, nothing indicates any solution to it.

10. The expansionist nature of the Zionist entity absolutely rules out any "settlement" debarring future

expansion. From a practical angle, in spite of all the guarantees it would gain from the area regarding the safety of its interests, the US will not stand in the face of Israeli lust for future expansion, all the more so because the US is aware that the Arab area is replete with variables. Should the present circumstances encourage it to settle the crisis created by Israeli expansion in a way agreeable to the regimes concerned (notwithstanding the obstacles already mentioned), the US cannot remain at ease regarding the future of its interests in the area. This fact, which renders the situation more complicated, constitutes a major obstacle retarding the attainment of a settlement that the regimes involved can accept and justify before the Arab nation.

11. In all cases, and all through the long and labyrinthine march that abounds in crises and tensions bred by the search for a settlement, the area will remain vulnerable to a great many anticipated and sudden variables. The Arab area is a land of variables. Any new development in any aspect of the prevailing state of affairs, is bound to change the present picture in an important, perhaps fundamental, way. This calls for full readiness and an incessant endeavour to properly scrutinize and analyze any change in the situation, in order to draw accurate conclusions and revolutionary attitudes.

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